

The Bulletin Magazine

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Next Week. "IN THE BROWNSTONE FRONT, a Thrilling Mystery Story by William MacHarg, Co-Author of "Blind Men's Eyes." Complete in One Issue

realize the hiatus and to question. Ward wisely told him the truth. Of Don Luis' brutality he would have preferred to say nothing; but Livingston felt it his right to know, so gradually they gave him the details as far as they knew.

Markham made no comment when their story was finished. His face was an expressionless mask; yet Ward noted that his hands were clenched till the nails bit into the palms.

Later he asked of Livingston:

"What's your idea, Jack? Just what are you going to do with me?"

"Why, we're going to send you back to the States."



and—to Sylvia," Jack managed bravely. "You'll start as soon as you're strong enough to travel."

"And you? You're not coming with me?"

"No. I've got to go back to La Candelaria to finish investigating conditions there; and Don Luis has promised us a three days' hunt, so—"

"I wonder," Tom Markham spoke very quietly, "if you'd let me go with you?"

"Why," Ward hesitated, "I'm not sure that it would be best. You're still rather weak, and the journey— Anyhow, aren't you eager to get back to your home, your friends, your wife?"

A slow smile crept about Markham's lips. The mirror they had at last allowed him to consult had told him much.

"I've been wondering a little," he said still quietly, "if my wife will be enthusiastically pleased to have me come back to her—like this—" His gesture was eloquent.

"Why, of course—" Ward attempted to protest.

Markham shook his head.

"These two years have left their mark on me—indubitably, I'm afraid. I can't go back—yet. I've got to find myself. I must pick up the broken threads. Meantime—Jack, will you take me back with you to La Candelaria when you go?"

"Why, of course, if you like," Jack said hospitably. "Glad to have you. You'll go as my guest—"

"If you don't mind, I'd rather go as Pedro, your servant."

"But see here, Markham—" Ward broke in.

"Wait a second, Leon," Jack interposed in turn; "let him go if he likes. It seems to me he has the right."

Later he added to Ward alone:

"If he wants to take a crack at our dear Don Luis, he has got a right to. Look what Don Luis has done to him—a white man and a citizen of the States! Can you blame Tom for being bitter? If he's planning to punch the blackguard's head, I'm for him. For half a cent I'd do it myself!"

"You found this Pedro efficient, seniors?" Don Luis inquired of his guests. "He served you well, I hope, despite his

lacking wit. Well, the best servants, I contend, are merely machines. I do not treat them as human beings; it spoils them, I find. Here, Pedro—"

"If you don't mind, Don Luis," Jack interposed hastily, "I'm keeping Pedro on as my valet. He suits me perfectly; with your permission, I may take him back to the States with me."

Don Luis shot a keen glance at his employer's son; then he shrugged and smiled.

"As you will, senior, of course. Pedro is yours." Which, by the by, struck his auditors as a felicitous remark on the don's part. Neither had been blind to the expression in Markham's eyes, and both were beginning to doubt the wisdom of having brought him back to La Candelaria.

"I'm afraid there's going to be trouble, Jack," the surgeon

possessed all the grace and charm of the true Castilian. But charming as he was to his guests, he was a tyrant to his servants. He spoke to Manuel and Jose as few men would speak to a worthless dog. And Ward, watching Tom Markham's face, felt at moments a twinge of uneasiness.

"I'm more and more sorry we brought Markham, Jack," he fell back to say to his friend as they rode; "I'm afraid he's bent on mischief."

"I'm hoping he means to give Don Luis the hiding he deserves!"

"I'm quite reconciled to Tom's beating up the don if he likes, but these Mexicans are an uncertain lot—"

"Don't borrow trouble, old man," Jack counseled; "we're here to see fair play, and if it'll be a satisfaction to Tom to lick Romaldez, why let him!"

They were riding a moment later on a

himself from the saddle and with a word summoned the luckless Manuel. Cringingly the peon-presented himself. Seething with wrath, the don pointed accusingly at a carelessly cinched girth which had slipped in the ascent.

"Spawn of the devil!" he raged, "would you send me to my death?"

The peon attempted a word of excuse, but Don Luis cut him short. With a torrent of Spanish invective which made both Jose and Manuel turn pale, he struck the cowering peon a savage blow. Again he lifted the whip—but the blow did not fall. With the spring of a tiger Tom Markham was upon him. Wrenching the whip from Don Luis' paralyzed grip, he brought it down with all the force of unleashed rage and hate across the Spaniard's handsome face.

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FOR a breathing space Don Luis stood stunned; then with an inarticulate cry of brute anger he rushed his assailant. But Markham, who had been a skilled amateur boxer during his college days, danced lightly about his raging victim, raining savage blows upon his head and shoulders. Again and again the lash descended, blood starting at its every stroke. Manuel and Jose stood transfixed with surprise and terror, and the other two Americans were not yet in sight.

At length Markham flung the splintered whip away. The two men closed, snarling like wild beasts. Markham was the taller and heavier of the two, but he was weakened by his recent illness, and

Don Luis had the strength and swiftness of a panther. Savagely they fought, each striving to force the other



An instant later, with a final effort, he plunged the knife into his assailant's side.

confided to his friend at first opportunity.

"I don't like the way Tom eyes the don."

"Oh, I don't know," comforted Livingston; "I think myself he's planning to give Don Luis the trouncing he deserves. But what's the odds? The don's an ardent coward—"

"That's it. He won't fight fair. He'll probably stick a knife between Tom's shoulder blades in the dark or hire some bravo to do it for him."

"Hardly likely, I think. Don Luis doesn't want to get into trouble. He's got a good thing here and he won't risk losing it to pay Tom out. Don't worry!"

THE hunt Don Luis had arranged for his guests was to extend over several days. Well mounted, amply provisioned and accompanied by two native servants, Manuel and Jose, in addition to Pedro, they set forth.

Higher and higher into the hills they rode, skirting rock-scarred cliffs and bottomless ravines, penetrating fastnesses that only Manuel's skilled guidance could have discovered to them. They rode for the most part in single file, with Manuel in the lead, followed by Pedro and Jose, all armed with machetes to cut away the encroaching foliage along the trail. Then came Don Luis and his guests, the latter thrilled by the wild beauty of this rugged region, high above the sea level and seemingly a limitless distance from civilization.

Don Luis was a perfect host. He had a certain beauty of face and form, and he

narrow ledge skirting a towering cliff on the one hand, with a sheer drop of perhaps a hundred feet on the other. Though the ledge was not too narrow for safety if one rode with care, it required trained attention and a steady nerve, and the two fell silent as they continued the toilsome ascent. They were crossing the range into the fertile valley abounding in game that lay beyond, according to their guide.

Don Luis, no stranger to this wild region, was far ahead. Intent upon another stupendous scenic surprise in store for his guests, he smiled to himself as he rode. But suddenly his smile died; his mobile face grew dark with fury. He was given to bursts of rage and never attempted to curb his passion.

"Ca-r-r-amba!" he muttered in his native tongue, "that Manuel, the accursed one! He shall pay. Dico, he shall pay!"

A moment later he rounded the cliff and emerged upon the wide plateau he had had in mind for the ravishment of his guests. He had not exaggerated its staggering effect. Beetling cliffs rose high above it on the right; at the left a mighty canyon gashed the hills like a wound. From its depths rose the distant roar of a swollen mountain torrent that foamed and brawled over a rock strewn bed far below.

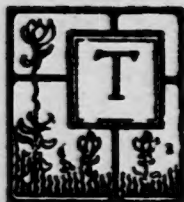
The peons had paused here to breathe their tired horses, when Don Luis swung

backward toward the edge of the cliff. Don Luis, quick as a cat, twined himself about the stronger man's body like a serpent, clinching his sinewy arms about his torso till Markham's breath came sharp and hard. Then suddenly Markham reached for the Spaniard's throat. His strong fingers closed upon it, gripped it tenaciously, sinking deep into the flesh with the force of their cruel pressure. All the smoldering hate and fury of weeks were in that grip that closed like a band of steel about the Spaniard's larynx. Don Luis' eyes started and his olive face grew purple. His breath came in gasping groans. Back and ever backward he felt himself forced. Closer to the brink they struggled—so close that a wind rising from the depths swept their faces. Don Luis' hand stole downward, groping wildly for the hunting knife in his belt. It touched the hilt. An instant later, with a final effort, he plunged it into the side of his assailant.

Suddenly a shot rang out. As Ward rounded the curve leading onto the plateau the peon Manuel stood holding a smoking rifle in his hand. For the merest fraction of an instant the fighters poised perilously on the utmost edge of the canyon; then, locked in the death grip, they pitched into the rock-torn river below.

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PLACE OF HEALING HEARTS



OM CRAIG looked like a worn-out business man when he came up into the North country, though he was not much past thirty. There were little lines and a tense look about his

mouth, and a wistful sickness in his clear gray eyes—eyes that were almost too clear.

He seemed to have no business, and neither did he appear to be on a vacation for his health. Wherever he went people looked a bit more closely at him than at ordinary men, for there was a certain fighting shyness about him, an aloofness, a nervous desire to be by himself that was not natural, and which, with the strange and almost beautiful clearness of his eyes, attracted attention.

Some guessed instinctively that he was grappling with something which was not disease, for he bore none of the signs of physical blight; others wondered; many talked. But Tom Craig confided in no one. The few words he exchanged with those about him were no more than the strictest courtesy demanded.

He watched people closely, especially women, and there were a few who noticed that a strange smile, which might have been of irony or contempt, crept subtly about his lips when he was looking at the other sex. The clerk in the King Edward, at North Bay, observed this most closely, and made his guess.

Craig remained at North Bay for a month, and then went on to Sudbury. He visited the nickel and silver mines and looked over a few claims, but with no idea of investing. A dozen times he dropped off at wilderness stations along the line of the Canadian Pacific between Sudbury and Port Arthur, and wherever he stopped people soon came to ask themselves why he had stopped.

He was a person without a motive. He asked no questions, sought no information, came quietly, paid his bills quietly, and departed so unostentatiously that he left mystery, and at times suspicion, behind him. He shunned the larger places, and at Nipisa hired a guide to canoe him fifty miles back in the wilderness. When he returned there was a different look in his eyes, his face was tanned, his lips were not so tense. But even his guide had not learned who he was, where he had come from, or what his business in life might be.

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FOR six months he drifted slowly westward, lying over for nine hours at Blind Indian River, that he might pass through Winnipeg in the night. Early in the autumn he got off at Regina, walked directly to the office of the commissioner of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police, and showed that most important person in the province a letter which gained for him an audience that lasted for more than an hour.

When the two came from the commissioner's private office the big man shook hands with him, spoke a few low words, and Craig was a "rookie" in the force.

Late in the winter he was transferred, with a corporal, to a new post that had been established at the headwaters of the Gray Beaver, 200 miles straight north of civilization in the Reindeer Lake country, west of Hudson's Bay. There was a little cabin freshly built, and in this he and Corporal Scottie McTabb lived alone, patrolling the wild country north, west and east of them for a hundred miles or more.

When the first few days of spring came Scottie McTabb knew this much about him: His name was Thomas Craig. He had been in the service nine months. He was an American, and before he came into the North he had been

By James Oliver Curwood

AUTHOR OF "FLOWER OF THE NORTH," ETC.

Illustrated by J. Allen St. John

The man could not forget the woman who had once been his wife. Then he met and loved Marie. A story of the North

a doctor. Scottie learned this when he was down with a fever. There is small joy in living alone with a man as uncommunicative as a clam, 200 miles from the last outpost, and the monotony of it began to wear on Scottie.

But one day there came a change, which was dynamic in its suddenness. Craig set out on a two days' trip northwest. It was a different man who returned. There was luster in his eyes. His cheeks were filled with a new flush; his voice was different; his step was different; the grip of his hand was different when he greeted Scottie McTabb. The little Scotch corporal waited, conjecturing at this new spirit, and it was while he was frying bacon for supper that the thing came out.

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SCOTTIE," said Craig, puffing hard at his pipe, "I hit the outlet of Silver Fox Creek coming back. It's not more than ten miles from here, is it?"

"About that," said Scottie.

"There's a Frenchman—a trapper—lives there. His name is Croisset, and he's married to an English woman. He's a half-breed—small and as black as an Indian. Know anything about 'em?"

"No."

Craig rose to his feet and paced back and forth across the cabin, puffing out blue volumes of smoke.

"They've got a girl," he said at last, and there was a curious tremble in his voice. "She ran in while I was there, with her arms full of red bakneesh. I didn't notice anything much except her eyes and her hair. I've dreamed of such eyes, but I've never seen them before. She's about 18, I guess—a wildflower of the forests, with her hair in a great long braid—"

He stopped and laughed a little confusedly.

"She struck me as being very pretty," he finished.

Scottie straightened and looked at Craig.

"She's more than that, ain't she, Craig?" he asked, laughing. "Come to think of it, I believe I do know something about them. There was a breed lived down on the Beaver two years ago, with an English wife, and they used to talk about his girl at the post. A raving beauty, that's what she was. Her name was Marie."

"Yes," said Craig quietly, "her name is Marie."

Scottie almost allowed the bacon to burn in his astonishment.

"You don't say!" he gasped. Then he laughed, and winked broadly at his companion. "I'm glad they've moved up near us, Tom. That little girl will do you good. That's what you need to make you sociable—a woman."

He was about to turn when the look that shot into Craig's face held him.

"She's only a girl—a little girl," he said; and there was that haunting repressiveness in his voice and manner again that irritated Scottie McTabb. He put down his bacon and stood over Craig, his blue eyes firing up with sudden determination.

"See here, Craig," he demanded gently, "you've got to come over with me! You're putting me on the blink, do you understand? If you're a murderer, out with it, and I'll help you. You ain't agreeable, and it's because there's something on your mind. I'm not curious. I

don't give a cuss for other people's secrets. But why not let me in on this? Company's good for one, you know. It might help. Let me in. What's up?"

His hand dropped on Craig's shoulder and a yearning crept into Craig's eyes. Scottie was the first to come at him in that way. There was comradeship in the little Scotchman's eyes.

Craig's face flushed as he answered.

"I believe it—would help," he said slowly. "Anyway, it will help to excuse me for being so beastly out of sorts. You see, Scottie—old man—it's one of those things a man thinks he ought to keep to himself. It's just the oldest—and the newest—story on earth: a woman, the other man—the crash. The plot is nearly always the same, with only a few variations. Sometimes there's a scandal, a murder, or a suicide. The fourth variation is when a man doesn't make a fool of himself. I didn't. Understand?"

"Yes," said Scottie, but he went on relentlessly: "She was your wife?"

"Yes."

Scottie's hand tightened on the other's shoulder.

"Let's hear about it."

"It's brief," said Craig, "because there's nothing new. I was a doctor, with a fair practice, and my fortune to make. And she—she was just what you called the little girl over there—a beauty. We were happy, almost like a couple of kids, until we moved to a bigger city. And then—maybe you can understand it, Scottie—she was so beautiful that she began to attract attention, and she came to like it. Automobiles, fine clothes, dreams I couldn't materialize, a few parties, and then the other man, and his bunch of money. When I found it out I wiped the slate clean, perhaps a little too quietly. That was two years ago. Six months after I left she had her divorce, and they were married. They were in Europe the last I heard."

"Any children?" asked Scottie.

"No."

The little corporal drew Craig to his feet and pulled him out through the door into the day that was fading into night. The smells of spring were in the air. The fat poplar buds were bursting. From the top of their ridge they could look down upon miles and miles of the quiet wilderness. For a moment Scottie pointed, without speaking. There was something of majestic peace in the day's end. Craig felt his lungs filling with the pure air, and the glory of the solitudes filled his soul with a strange rest even before Scottie spoke.

"See what you've come to, Tom," he said at last. "I was worse than you when I came up here, for I was dying of bad lungs. Look! Ain't it glorious? You've got that, and she—why, she's gone to hell," he said simply.

For an instant Craig's hands clenched. But there was the touch of a brother in Scottie's hand as he said:

"Let's go in and finish the bacon."

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LATER Craig went out alone and smoked. The confession that he had made to Scottie, the revelation of heartache that he had sworn to keep to himself, had already helped him, as the little corporal had predicted. But he knew that after a little he would regret having made that confession, for Scottie would see less and less of manhood in him now if he did not straighten up, like a tree

that has been bent and twisted by storm, and face life anew.

What if he should tell Scottie that in his bitterest hours he could not bring himself to see the woman as she was, but always as she had been once upon a time in a fairland of long ago? Scottie would call him a fool.

Fact and reason could not shatter this thing that was in him. More than once during those last six months he had seen her cheeks flushed with the flush of wine, her eyes sparkling with the triumph of conquest, her beautiful body throbbing with the new and maddening spirit that had taken possession of her. Scottie, and most other men, would have seen her like that, and would have cursed her. But it was different with him, perhaps because he was an idealist and had worshiped at the foot of a shrine which no shock could destroy.

A week later he was near the outlet of Silver Fox Creek, and something turned him in the direction of Pierre Croisset's cabin. It was early in the afternoon, and the sun was warm, and the air was filled with the pleasant perfume of earth and shrub and tree bursting into life. He had come within a quarter of a mile of Pierre's home when a sound stopped him. It was the low growling of a dog, very near to him; and then, as he listened, there came a girlish peal of laughter, so clear and sweet that he smiled in sheer sympathy with it.

He drew quietly nearer to the sound, and suddenly he found the sunlit glow of the Silver Fox almost at his feet. The girl's laugh rippled up to him again, and he peered down through a break in the balsam. Marie Croisset was so close that he could have tossed a pebble upon her bare head. In the center of the stream was a rock, upon which she had lured a huge, tawny-haired sledge dog. From her canoe the girl was teasing him.

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CRAIG chuckled softly as he looked down upon their play. The girl's beauty stirred him strangely. It was half a child's beauty, half a woman's. Her slender body seemed a part of the canoe; her movements were like music as she balanced herself after each reckless feint toward the rock, or swift dip of her cedar paddle. Her round, brown arms were bare to the elbow, and suddenly she plunged one of them deep into the water and sent a cascade of spray over her comrade on the rock.

Craig caught the cry on his lips. For a moment she lost her balance. The canoe tipped; she gave a shrill little cry, and then, after another moment of suspense in which Craig was ready to jump, the frail craft straightened. The girl's heavy braid had slipped over her shoulder into the water, and as she bent her head so that the drip of it would not wet her, she pointed a playful finger at the dog.

"Now see what you've done, Trigger!" she cried. "I must go ashore and dry my hair, and you—you must swim!"

She swung the canoe quickly to the sandy shore, almost directly under Craig, and sprang out with the lightness of a fawn. Then her fingers slipped with feminine swiftness through the glistening strands of her hair, and before Craig could move, it fell in a dark and rippling glory to her hips, enriched by the pale glow of the sun that was already sinking behind the forests.

He caught the laughing beauty of her face as she turned, its deep, wild-rose flush, the glow of her eyes, the taunting loveliness of her red lips as she laughed at Kasan on the rock; and with that vision of her breaking like a ray of sunlight into his darkened soul, Craig slipped quietly away.

He was curiously excited, and he found himself thinking strange things. It was not exertion that had made his heart beat a little faster or that had brought the warm glow into his face. His thoughts

BROKEN WINGS

By Leigh Gordon Giltner

Illustrated by M. D. Smith



SYLVIA stared unconsciously out of the car window. She did not note the increasing wild picturesqueness of the flying landscape it framed; she was indeed scarcely conscious that they

had crossed the border and were upon Mexican soil.

She felt dazed and numb. That she would presently begin to suffer was inevitable—the memory of Jack's stricken face was earnest of that—but as yet she seemed only stunned. There had been a silly lovers' quarrel; Tom Markham had presented himself at an opportune time and renewed his suit, which, in a fit of pique, she had encouraged—and she had the rest of her life in which to repent her rashness.

Under no illusions as to his bride's feeling for him, Markham had effaced himself as far as possible during the wedding journey. He was thoughtful of her comfort and duly attentive, but he did not at all intrude upon her reserve.

"The 'absent treatment'—the thing!" he realized with a wry smile. "Sure to make her heart grow fonder than if I stick around steadily, reminding her that she's drawn me for keeps instead of Jack."

So, though twilight had deepened to dusk, Sylvia continued to sit alone and gaze out at the wildly beautiful landscape she could but dimly see.

Five seconds later there came a sudden jar and a terrific grinding crash. Sylvia felt herself flung heavily forward. She awoke after a long interval to find herself being capably cared for at a neighboring hacienda. She was bruised, shaken and suffering from nervous shock, but not seriously hurt.

Others were less fortunate. A flawed rail had sent the engine tottering along the ties, to crash into the iron support of a trestle bridging a ravine. Engine, tender and two coaches had gone down, and the remaining coaches were overturned by the impact. The roar of the bursting boiler followed hard upon the first crashing shock.

In a mere breathing space a superbly efficient mechanism had been reduced to a twisted mass of steel and iron.

OUT of the ruins rose shrieks of terror, drowning the moans of the dying. Trapped like caged animals, those who had escaped serious injury faced a worse fate. The flames were taking hold upon the upholstery of the cars; the intense heat and stifling smoke made the work of rescue difficult if not impossible.

Out of the hell of smoke and flame a man staggered. The eyes which looked from the white face, stained with blood from an ugly wound on the head, were wide and vacant.

For an instant he stood staring dazedly about him; then, reeling, he fell, half rose and fell again. Semi-conscious from shock and pain, impelled by sheer brute instinct to escape the horrors surrounding him, he presently dragged himself by painful stages into the fringe of forest along the road bed.

From somewhere out of the shadows where they were lurking two native vandals crept silently upon the victim they had been trailing. Swiftly they stripped him of money, of valuables, of even his outer garments. Then, in quest of further loot, they stole silently away and left him lying there in the thick tangle of undergrowth. Town found him lying as they had left him, unconscious, motionless, inert. He still bore evidence to the brightening day.

"I am after something after your journey, aren't you?" Don Luis Remaldez, manager in chief of the Livingston inter-

ests in Mexico, smiled at his newly arrived American guests with a flash of white teeth under his dark mustache.

Jack Livingston's own winning smile flashed in answer.

"Happy suggestion, Don Luis!" he approved.

"And the senior doctor?" Remaldez turned courteously to Jack's companion.

"Sounds good to me," concurred the latter. "But I think you said a cocktail—?"

"Why not, senior? We are not quite barbarians here at La Canfalarria; we have the pleasure to entertain many guests from your country; I myself was educated in the States. A cocktail, then, shall we say? Pedro shall mix it. Pedro!"

A peon, in native garb, entered on the word. Ward's trained surgeon's eye was quick to note that a livid scar, apparently the mark of a whip, cut diagonally across his face from chin to brow, and that he dragged one limb slightly as he walked. The creature seemed utterly cowed. He advanced and stood humbly before his master, who gave a curt order in Spanish.

With a listless, "Si, senior," he limped away.

"Pedro," said Don Luis, noting Ward's interest, "is not of our country—an alien, a gringo, we believe. Months ago some of my people found him in the forest, insensible from an ugly wound on the head. He had been stripped of everything, even his coat. The blow had destroyed his memory—amnesia, I think you call it, doctor? He could not even recall his own name."

"He has been with you some months, you say?" Ward queried.

"For more than a year—two years, perhaps. He is a good servant, this Pedro, though at first he lacked training. That training, seniors—his smile was significant and evil—"I have supplied."

Jack left the talk to Ward and Don Luis as they waited. His thoughts, as always, reverted to Sylvia. It had been a matter of no particular surprise to their immediate circle that he should have renewed his attentions. It was understood that these two had been engaged before Sylvia's marriage to Markham, and their engagement seemed a natural sequence of the tragedy which had left Sylvia a widow.

Two years after Markham's death conditions in Mexico, where Livingston senior had large holdings, required the personal attention of Livingston junior, and he urged Sylvia to hurry her preparations and go with him as his wife; but, with the memory of that wedding journey still in mind, Sylvia refused.

She dreaded, with a species of superstitious fear, the thought of Jack's going there for even a brief sojourn, and it was only when he told her he had persuaded Ward, his closest friend, to accompany him that she grew in any degree reconciled to his departure.

LEON WARD, too much the American to be content to remain a gentleman of leisure, had already made a name for himself in surgery, though he was a year Jack's junior. Despite this latter fact, during their long friendship he had constituted himself, in a sense, Jack's mentor, and Sylvia felt unconsciously relieved at the knowledge that he would be with her fiancé on the journey which both welcomed for its novelty.

So, having won Sylvia's consent to an

immediate marriage on his return, Livingston had turned his face to what, even to his cosmopolitanism, was an unknown land. But his thoughts constantly drifted back to her.

He came out of his reverie with a start. Pedro stood at his elbow with a laden tray. As he lifted one of the glasses it held Jack glanced casually at the peon who offered it. Instantly the glass fell from his fingers and shattered on the stone floor.

"STUPID of me!" he managed, though a strange tremor was shaking him. "Pardon, Don Luis."

"It is no matter," Don Luis courteously assured. "Pedro will bring another glass."

Jack's eager gaze queried the peon's stolid face as he again approached. A thatch of heavy hair hung over the brow; the scarred countenance was sullen and hopeless; the eyes downcast.

"Pedro!" Jack spoke sharply.

The dull eyes lifted to the speaker's face; in them was neither recognition nor speculation; they were as the eyes of one whose soul is dead.

"Senior!" the man said humbly.

"A light, Pedro." As Pedro stood close beside him, holding the lighted match to his cigar, Livingston, the cold hand of fear clutching at his heart the while, scanned more closely the disfigured face.

"But little better than an imbecile, seniors," the don commented, "yet a good servant in his way. His mind is a blank as to his past; even his name is one we gave him, but he speaks Spanish a little and—he obeys. At first—Don Luis smiled grimly—"It was not so. But now—as you see—"

It was Pedro who showed the travelers to their rooms that night and performed for them such trifling services as cash required. Livingston's eyes followed his every movement. Suddenly he essayed an experiment, scarce knowing what he hoped—or feared—to ascertain.

"Tom!" He shot the name out suddenly. "Tom!"

Pedro looked up stupidly. "I am called Pedro, senior," he said dully; that was all.

When with a humble "Buenas noches, senior!" he presently went away, he left Jack Livingston face to face with the problem of his life. All night long the youth sat smoking at his window.

As soon as he might he sought his friend.

"Leon," he prefaced, "have you by any chance looked closely at Pedro?"

"Why?" Ward answered. "I haven't observed him particularly except to note that he shows the marks of Don Luis' efficient 'training' pretty plainly."

"Then you haven't guessed who he is?"

"No. What are you getting at? How should I know him? Why?"

"Because," Livingston said slowly, "because this Pedro, this wretched sort of Don Luis' happens to be my former friend, Tom Markham."

Ward started sharply.

"Nonsense, Jack! Why, it's impossible! Tom Markham's been dead and buried these two years."

"Supposedly. But there was never any positive proof that the charred body they buried was his. I tell you, Leon, I'd know Tom Markham anywhere on earth, and this Pedro is my friend—"

"And Sylvia's husband," Ward quietly supplemented.

"And Sylvia's husband," Jack echoed steadily, though his lips were white.

"That being true—?" Leon Ward eyed his friend keenly.

"I mean to take him back to her, of course."

"And you're sure that Sylvia will be glad to have him back—like that?"

"That's not the point, Leon. I mustn't think of that. I've had it out with myself, and I've made up my mind to one thing. This poor cowed wretch was—my friend Tom Markham, and an American citizen."

"But," Ward protested, "he's almost an imbecile—"

"At that, if there's even a spark of the man he was left in his battered body, it's my duty—ours—to try to rekindle it. Leon, you're a crack surgeon. Isn't there something you can do, some operation—?"

"That depends. I couldn't undertake to say, of course, without an examination."

"We'll fix that. Couldn't we take him somewhere—there's a hospital or so at Vera Cruz, isn't there?—and try it out?"

"But Don Luis?"

"Oh, I'll square Don Luis. I'll find it necessary to run up to Vera Cruz, and ask to take Pedro as my valet—just leave it to me."

"But have we the right to operate without the patient's consent? And, even if he gave it, Pedro's not responsible."

"Then some one must act for him," Livingston decided. "I'll assume whatever risk or responsibility there may be. If the poor chap dies, he'll be better off than as he is; if he lives—" He could not get on.

"Yes," Ward prompted, "if he lives—? Have you thought what that will mean, Jack, to you—and to Sylvia?"

Livingston nodded briefly.

"I know," he said.

Ward held out his hand.

"Jack," he said, "you're just about the dearest chap I know. And I'm mighty lucky to be your friend."

PEDRO was pathetically pliant. Unquestioningly he yielded to Ward's examination, which meant to his clouded mind nothing more than a strange whim of the Americanos.

"It can be done, I believe, Jack," Ward stated when the examination was finished. "I won't talk technicalities, but there's a pressure upon the brain which a simple operation may relieve. If we can get him to Vera Cruz—"

"We can. You'll operate?"

"If you wish, though I'm still far from sure he's the man you think. I never knew Markham intimately, but—"

"This is Markham, I'll take oath. I'll wire for hospital accommodations—"

"Will Don Luis allow Pedro to go with you?"

"Why not? He's anxious to ingratiate himself with me, and what's a peon more or less to Don Luis? One will answer as well as another to be kicked and cursed. Leon, when I look at good old Tom and think how that damned greaser has used him, it's all I can do to keep my hands off his throat."

"Easy, old chap! We don't want any row. We must manage the thing discreetly for Sylvia's sake. It may be the operation won't succeed, but I think you realize that I'll give you and—Pedro—my best."

The operation was a success. From the moment when, coming out from under the influence of the anesthetic, the patient lifted his eyes to Jack Livingston's tense, white face and quietly spoke his name, the peon Pedro was merged in the personality of Tom Markham of New York.

All memory of the past two years seemed blotted from Markham's mind. But the day soon came when he began to

moved swiftly as he went toward Croisset's. He had looked upon a miracle. He had found beauty, and purity, and happiness, in the heart of a wilderness; and in spite of him there rose another face before him—the face of one who was delving to the depths of life itself, in her search for the happiness which had come to this girl whose only companion outside of her cabin home was a dog!

For an hour he smoked his pipe with Croisset, while Croisset's wife prepared an early supper. And then Marie came, running breathlessly with Trigger at her heels, her unbound hair still leaping in riotous beauty about her. When she saw Craig standing before her, straight and smiling, his hand reaching out to her, there came a swift change in her face. The red blood surged into her cheeks; the laughter left her eyes; and Craig, looking deep into them as he held her small, trembling hand, saw something in their shy loveliness that was not of the child—but of woman.

It was late when he left. The moon had risen, and the wonderful word about him was bathed in its soft radiance. Croisset and the girl went with him to the beginning of the trail at the edge of the clearing. He shook hands with Pierre. The half-breed was relighting his pipe when he took Marie's hand again and looked once more down deep into her eyes. They met his own, a little frightened, a little questioningly, lustreously beautiful and pure in the moon-glow; and Craig saw in them that something indefinable—more marvelous than life—which his soul had been crying to see in another woman's eyes since the dawn of desire within him. And now he knew that he had never seen it, not even in those first days of the fairyland, years and years ago.

"Good night, little Marie," he whispered.

And that night, for the first time, his voice rose in song as he went homeward through the forest.

TWICE each week, then three times, Craig went to Croisset's cabin now. And each time that wonderful thing that he had found in the girl's eyes grew larger and more beautiful for him, until at last it walked with him, like a spirit, when he was alone, soothing the old pain at his heart, filling up the gnawing emptiness, covering over with sweetness and purity and love the ghastly ruins of what had once been. And still, as the weeks of spring drifted into summer, he spoke no word of love, and told Marie nothing of what had happened in the days gone by. He dreaded the moment of telling the story of his broken and twisted life.

And at last the day of it came. They had climbed to the top of the Sun Rock, half a mile from the Croisset cabin, and a hundred feet beneath them the vast solitude of green swamp and forest and sunlit lake reached out mile upon mile. Marie sat at his feet, gazing out upon the wonderful world, with her chin resting in the cup of her hands.

"Marie," he said suddenly, "I like your other name best—the Indian name which your father sometimes calls you. It's going to be my name for you. Me-lee—what does it mean?"

He saw the color deepening in the girl's cheek. She looked up at him, and

there was a mischievous glow in her eyes.

"It is Cree," she said. "An old Indian first called me that down at the mission, where I went to school."

"I know," he persisted, "but what does it mean?"

The color grew deeper. She did not look up again.

"Do you see—off there—where the sun is setting?" she asked. "Out there—somewhere between the forests and the mountains—is what the Cree



She had lured the dog to a rock in the middle of the stream and was teasing him.

call the Valley of Silent Men. It is the Indian heaven. There was a time, ages and ages ago, when the Cree had no heaven, and at that time there lived a great chief who had a daughter so good and so beautiful that the Great Spirit himself fell in love with her, and came down upon earth to take her for his wife. But the old chief loved her, and wouldn't give her up, until at last the Great Spirit promised that in return for his daughter he would create a great happy hunting ground in which all of the chief's people would come to life and live forever after death. The chief gave up his daughter, and so, when his people die, they now go into the Valley of Silent Men. The girl's name was Me-lee."

Craig's hand touched her shoulder.

"The old Indian down at the mission was right, Me-lee."

She felt the warmth of his hand, and trembled.

"Why?" she whispered.

"Because—because you are the purest and the most beautiful creature in the world, Me-lee," he cried softly. "And I love you—love you—"

His arms gathered her close, and then in the shame and the joy that swept through him like sudden fire he knew that the time had come when he must tell her all that he had told Scottie back in the cabin—and more.

It came hard, slowly at first, with Me-lee's pure eyes looking up into his own. And into those eyes, as he went on with the terrible story, there came the dark,

startled pain of one who has learned that she is not first, the look that Craig had dreaded to see. But in an instant something else took its place, a look of wistful intentness, of pain for him—and her hand stole up to his face, and stroked it with the gentleness of one who understood, and who grieved because of his grief.

After that, in the days that followed, Me-lee seemed to Craig something more than child or woman. In her eyes, in her gentle touch, in her wistful quickness to respond to his moods, he saw that she was fighting for him—and not for herself. It was midsummer when a messenger

embraced. Her lips were kissing him. He heard her repeating his name over and over again, and he caught her to his breast madly.

"Isobel—"

The sound of her name brought him back, and with a still stranger cry he thrust her away from him and stood facing her with a face as white as death.

"Tom—Tom—" she moaned, quailing before the terrible look which she saw in his eyes now, "I've been searching for you—hunting for you—for months and months. Oh, my God! Tom—Tom—you'll take me back! I didn't know how I loved you—until after—that. You'll take me back—you'll take me back—"

Her arms reached to him pleadingly, but his fingers did not unclinch. He noticed now that she was dressed in a white, shimmering gown that made her look like an angel. She was older; there were the faintest lines about her mouth, but she was more beautiful than ever.

"Forbes—" He spoke the name in a hard, cold voice.

"He is dead," she said. "He died six months—after—after—we were married. Tom—I've suffered—more than I can ever tell. I've been punished. Oh, Tom, I've been punished—"

"And he left you his money?"

Her eyes lit up at the eagerness of his question.

"Yes—yes—I am rich, Tom. And it is yours, all yours! Oh, you will forgive me—you will forgive me—you will take me back—"

"He left you—plenty of money?" he asked gently.

"Enough to last us always," she cried. "Nearly a million!"

Her white fingers were clasping, and unclasping in the filmy lace of her breast.

"We can travel," she went on, excitement glorifying her eyes. "We can go where you have always wanted to go. You need never work again, Tom—never—never." She emphasized the words almost shrilly.

He held out his hand and led her to the door. It was a white, pure night. Over the top of the earth the polar star gleamed like a mellow moon. The Great Dipper shone like a constellation of suns. Under the glorious sky the wilderness lay black and silent and peaceful. She looked into his face and marveled at its quiet happiness.

"You have made me suffer—terribly," he said in a low voice, "but I do not lay it up against you. No, I do not forgive you tonight, Isobel—because I forgave you long ago—up there"—and he pointed into the North. "I am glad he left you the money. It will be a reward for your suffering. I hope you will be happy—always. And I—"

"And you—" She trembled.

"See!" he cried, pointing again to the dazzling star. "Up there I went, wrecked and shattered, soul and heart gone—and I found peace. A woman—a girl—gave them back to me. What would you have me do?"

"We will pay her," whispered the woman who had been his wife.

"Yes, we will pay her," he repeated, and his face was illumined with the joy of the thought. "And what do you think would be fair payment for the saving of a man's soul?" he asked.

"Ten thousand—twenty thousand—more—more, if that is not enough." He was tightening his belt.

"I am going to pay her—on Christmas day," he said quietly. "We are going to be married then. Good-by, Isobel, and may God bless you—always!"

Like a shadow he slipped away into the white gloom of the night, into the North.

came up from Nelson House with word for Craig. He was wanted there at once. There was no explanation. He was wanted on a matter of importance.

Scottie carried word to Me-lee, while Craig started south the next day. It was evening of the third day when Craig reached Nelson House. There were lights in the factor's quarters, and Craig went there at once. Blood, the Hudson Bay Company's agent, greeted him mysteriously. He wrung Craig's hands until they ached, and almost immediately excused himself a little excitedly. He was gone five minutes, and Craig sat down, wondering what was in the wind.

HE HEARD Blood returning. And then the door to the big, lighted room which was the factor's "den" opened and closed softly, and he heard a quick, gasping breath. His back was turned, and he whirled about.

"Good God!" he cried, springing to his feet.

Five steps away, her arms reaching out to him, her beautiful face filled with a longing and a joy which he had never seen there before, stood the woman who had once been his wife.

"Tom!"

Some strange thing leaped into his head and dazed him. He staggered toward her with a wild, low cry, seeing her through half blindness, and her name fell from his lips in a great sob. For a few insane moments reason left him. He felt her arms almost choking him in their

lighted lantern before the window, counting the while with the mechanical rhythm that Obermeister had taught too well.

Half an hour later great shells screeched overhead and exploded with red fury amid the long lines of infantry that marched on the south road. They searched out every curve and bend in the thoroughfare, decimating the tired regiments and causing signal rockets of warning to rise along the great column.

IN THE L'Ontaine home, where they had succeeded the German officers, Colonel Frenaud and his staff officers held lengthy consultation.

"They have intelligence from this side," declared the old man. "Troop movements are not reported here until sundown. The actual changes in battery and company placements take place after dark. Yet the German fire picks us out unerringly, even in deepest darkness. Some one in Monarche is a traitor to France!"

"Nom de Dieu!" exclaimed Captain Charonne. "And with only old men and young girls and children remaining! Perhaps some boche has turned the head of a poor, foolish girl and made her the dupe for pre-arranged signals!"

Castenne, a cynical lad from the Latin quarter, who had but recently won his commission, smiled slightly and nodded toward the closed door.

"Here," he said, "we have the best beauty in Monarche! No doubt some boche Beau Brummell has tried his wiles here. Perhaps—"

Captain Charonne did not seem pleased with the trend his idea was taking.

"Nonsense," he said sharply. "Could you have seen that girl when we entered Monarche last Monday you would know better. There is real brain behind her rose and snow beauty! It isn't French women with spirit that we must suspect! It is the thick-witted peasant lass, the dullard, for only dull wits can be conquered by dull wits!"

Hardly had the captain ceased speaking when the door burst open. Annette entered. Her ordinarily pink cheeks were very white, and from one of them there descended upon her bare shoulder a tiny trickle of blood.

"Messieurs," she cried, "I have found this traitor to France! Three days now have I watched Antoine, the half-wit. Always he steals away up to the old chateau. Tonight I found him there—swinging a lantern across the window. He said it was a great secret, but after a

while, with cookies, I wheedled it from him. He has been coached, messieurs! This Obermeister has taught him how to count the big guns and watch the troop movements and signal to him with lights!"

Silence descended upon the little group. By common impulse they stared at the girl's torn dress. On one bare shoulder, gleaming white as ivory in the lamplight, was the livid imprint of a huge hand. A scratch, starting at the corner of one of the wide eyes, carried across her cheek.

"But you, mademoiselle!" exclaimed Captain Charonne, "you are hurt! If that traitorous half-wit has touched—"

Tears filled her eyes.

"He is not a traitor—in the heart—mon capitaine!" she exclaimed. "He has the mind of a child. With him it was only the game! He thought that he and Obermeister were great friends. When I explained it frightened him—after he understood. Then he was terrified. He did not intend to—to hurt me! He wanted me not to tell. But it is for France, messieurs!"

They sought for Antoine, but the great idiot had slunk away in the darkness. Under a half-flooded culvert he lay all that night and the next day. Slowly the idea penetrated the foggy mind. He had betrayed France! He had killed soldiers that had come to save his mother and him and—Annette! And instead of being the great friend with Capitaine Obermeister, he had been a fool!

The sentimental aspect did not appeal to the dwarfed mind, but the horror of his situation grew upon him. People would point fingers at him and sneer when he went back home. And in the kitchens the women who had given him cookies would say:

"Go away, Antoine. Of you has the boche made a great monkey!"

One glancing under the shadow of the culvert would have seen the blue eyes in the great pale face wide with desperation. Only the hideous round head projected above the sluggish current of muddy water. The thin black hair lay in wet wisps across his forehead; the lips framed over again snatches of the conversation.

"We are the good friends, eh, Antoine?" he would say aloud. Then: "And so you are a traitor to France, Antoine! You kill our brave poilus who come to save Monarche!"

Annette had said that with flashing eyes, her lips curled with bitter, imperious scorn of the half-wit's gullibility. He wished now that he were back in the L'Ontaine kitchen, eating the fine cookies that Annette had always given him before he had been fooled by Captain Obermeister.

A slow rage kindled in his breast against the German who had taught him the signals. All day it mounted, and when the nightfall enabled him to creep from his hiding place, hungry and drenched and miserable, it was a consuming passion. Creeping with brute cunning on his hands and knees he reached the old chateau. In the darkness his great groping fingers found his proudest possession, a shining Algerian bayonet, picked up on Karsy ridge.

The idiot's appearance in the French front line trenches was accepted as proof that he had been sent to help dig in one of the saps. He nodded stupidly when asked and they sent him forward, instructed to report to a sergeant who would equip him with a shovel.

He failed to report. Nor was he ever seen again in old Monarche.

IT HAD been a quiet night along the Saraine trenches. Northward the German artillery was very active, and the French guns suspiciously silent. The drowsy trio in the German listening post were resting secure in their peaceful isolation when a great bloated head rose above the little parapet. The one who first witnessed the apparition sought to cry out, but a great fist descended upon his head, and he crumpled up silently. Then the Algerian bayonet flashed in the dim light.

A shot rang out from the cup-shaped depression, and a machine gun in the

German trenches "dusted" the darkness in front, as a precaution against a raid by French patrols. Things became quiet again and a sergeant cursed the nervous fool in the listening post who had caused the wasting of so much good ammunition.

Out of the listening post the great head emerged. Blood trickled down over the pallid countenance. Only one boche had had a chance to fire, and his erratic aim grazed the half-wit's head. The Algerian bayonet had retaliated more effectively.

In the first line trenches a drowsy sentinel went down under the great bulk. There was a brief shadow against the pale night sky as Antoine the avenger crept out of the trench. He chose the level ground, thus chancing to escape other Germans whom he would have encountered had he used the communication trenches.

He felt quite at home around the Saraine bridge. There he had been wont to come in earlier years, the jest and gibe of playmates half his age. And the stolid, unreasoning flame of rage rose higher and higher. With catlike caution he crept up the stairs of the old church steeple. There seemed to be a tiny light glowing overhead.

He peered into the room. In front of a small table sat Captain Obermeister, staring at a blueprint map, marked with irregular lines of red-topped pins. Anon he opened a flashlight and let it play three times across the window. Then he would curse under his breath, consult his wrist watch and tap the table nervously.

"I have come to see my good friend," said a voice behind him.

He spun around and met the pale eyes of Antoine Cherette. The great idiot's huge head, with the thin, sparse hair, was sodden with blood. In his hand he held a crimson bayonet. The vacant face was set in lines of terrible fury.

Obermeister hurled the table over and sprang back, trying to clear his automatic. But the buttoned flap made for fatal delay.

When a junior officer came racing up the stairs an hour later he stopped with a scream of terror. In the light of the little lamp a great hulking creature with a swollen head sat in a pool of blood staring across the valley toward the flaming lines of Ventrière.

He swayed rhythmically back and forth, holding up before him the German officer's severed head. And all the while he counted monotonously. "Une, deux, trois, quatre—"

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Obermeister
hurled the table
over and sprang
back, trying to
clear his
automatic.



ANTOINE THE AVENGER

By Arthur James Hayes

Illustrated by Henry Thiede



YOU can count, Antoine?"

The big Bavarian officer placed his arm around the other's shoulder and whispered the query. The half-wit's vacant face lighted up.

"Oui, m'sieu!" he exclaimed. "Une, deux, trois, quatre—"

He chanted the numbers up to ten, swinging his head and shoulders rhythmically as he enunciated the words.

"Ten," said the officer with a satisfied smile. "That is very good. Now we shall play a little game. Always it is quiet here in the old ruins. The shells go by overhead and the shrapnel makes the terrible noise in the meadow, but here it is fine. You and I are friends. Perhaps if we go away over beyond the distant hills we shall still be friends. And I want you every night to send me a message."

"A message, m'sieu?" The white, stupid face was lifted inquiringly.

"Yes, Antoine." The German intelligence officer smiled rather too effusively, but Antoine Cherette's perceptions were far from subtle. It is like this: When the other soldiers come up, you and I shall have a great secret. When many of them come with guns you shall put a light in the window here and count to ten. Thus: "Une, deux, trois—"

The officer groped in his pocket until he had extricated a huge cake of sweet chocolate. The moron seized it eagerly.

"It means just—just good luck, Antoine. It means 'Good night' to an old friend. These people here are not your friends, Antoine. You said yourself that when the French soldiers were here before they laughed and made jokes at you. We—have we done that?"

"You made them stop," admitted the lad. His broad, flabby face was lifted trustingly toward the officer. "You made them stop," he repeated gravely. "And we, m'sieu—we are good friends?"

"Very good friends, Antoine. Only to my friends do I bring the sweet chocolate and ask for messages. You are sure you know how?"

He explained again, and the idiot counted, swaying his great hydrocephalic head, with its thin, straggly black hair. Outside white smoke plumes lifted lazily as the French shrapnel spattered the German first line trenches. Overhead the air was full of whining and screeching echoes as the great guns hurled defiance back and forth.

YET in the cool shadows of the ruined chateau the afternoon was strangely peaceful. The officer schooled the hulking half-wit until he enacted the whole scene as automatically as if hypnotized. Time after time the lantern was placed in the window and the droning voice and awayward head tabulated the count. Then it was hidden in the debris of the corner and the counting was repeated.

"When the soldiers come, Antoine, always send me the message. From the hill here you can see them. They will look in the distance like a great gray snake. When you see dust rising along the road as far as the eye can carry you will send the message. And when the soldiers go away again or only a few remain, you will drive the two cows down the hill. Always have the funny old white one in front, eh, Antoine? Then I will know it is the good joke between us."

The instructions were rather numerous, but the officer—he had been a professor of psychology at Heidelberg when war was declared—coached the lad carefully, taking care that each instruction was rehearsed time and again, and closely associated with a series of mechanical actions.

The feeble brains of the mentally deficient, he well knew, are susceptible of

The idiot could count to ten. And with proper coaching his dull mind could signal troop movements. A tale of the great retreat

many complex impressions provided they are accompanied by some rhythmic principle. The peasant lad's childish conceit he flattered with the guise of a great mystery, and his instructions he intensified by constant repetition.

Hemmelbach's division stubbornly contested the French advance. But overhead the great warplanes hovered insistently, defying the anti-aircraft guns and vanquishing the German airmen sent against them. The Ventrière sector was twisting its lines from day to day, like a snake in agony. The great bold triangle that Hemmelbach had thrust westward to worry the vitals of the French offensive blunted and crumpled like the prow of a ship in collision. The concrete-lined trenches that had been prepared months in advance lost their characteristic trimness under the persistent French fire and were battered into shapeless scars of raw gravel.

HEMMELBACH was preparing to rectify the line. Herr Obermeister, now Captain Obermeister, spent three days in the coaching of the duped half-wit. Once he uncovered an obstacle that threatened the success of his plan. Antoine demanded some return signal to assure himself that his message had been duly received and appreciated. Indeed, he even ventured a suggestion.

"By the old bridge across the Saraine," he said, "is the funny steeple. There you will also count ten for me, eh, m'sieu? Then we will know, we friends, that our message to each other is good."

The broad, flabby face was lifted and the weak eyes in the disease-blighted head regarded him eagerly. Obermeister nodded. A meaningless flash from the farther ridge would signify little in a night lit with bursting shells and signal rockets.

"In the funny steeple I will answer you back," he assented. "I will make three flashes three times. That will mean 'Good luck to Antoine, and may we drink the red wine together in Berlin!'"

He uttered the toast in a full, oratorical voice that made it tremendously important and significant in the mind of the hulking idiot. After that Antoine was really eager that the German officer should be gone, that the fascinating play might commence.

He even spoke to Annette about it once, very casually, so she might not guess what great and fine secrets he and the German had together.

"When do they go?" he asked. He had come in the kitchen very quietly, and his voice, close to Annette's shoulder, caused her to jump back and scream. Then her great black eyes flashed angrily.

"Negaud!" she cried. "Pourquoi you must always come like the thief to steal? Make a little honest noise on the steps, so I may not have the great fright."

Antoine grinned vacuously and the girl resumed her work. She sympathized with the poor, blundering weak-wit. He stood six feet two inches tall at 19, and his head was of an enormous size and revolting rotundity. His grotesqueness and absurd antics had kindled the flame of grim Teutonic humor, and he had been since the first occupation of Monarche a sort of regimental jester.

This toleration had kept him alive and idle when the other very young and very old men were slaving at trench digging or lying stark and still beside the ivy covered stone wall. He loitered about from one door to another. Crusts of bread and

portions of tinned meat were thrown to him by the German officers and men, and he was fed on the sweetmeats he loved by the sympathetic women of the village.

Annette, despite her crisp tongue and quick impatience, was a prime favorite of his. Her slender figure and vivid rose and white beauty made no impression upon him, but her willingness to give him sugar and sweet chocolate won him to ready vassalage. The girl was secretly sickened by his large head and thin, straggling hair, but the mere fact that French blood flowed in his veins partially redeemed his presence.

Her jet fringed eyes and red lips had won too much flattery from the sleek young German officers. She was heartily tired of polished boots and blond mustaches. In the little kitchen where she cooked the meals for eight officers of the Seventh Saxe-Altenburg Infantry she stared westward, her wide eyes aching for a sight of the swarthy French pollux.

Stupid and stolid Antoine seemed to sense her mood. His great jaws crunched a crisp cookie as he stood beside her, following the direction of her gaze.

"When do they go?" he asked. "The Germans?" asked the girl in a low voice.

He nodded. "Soon," she whispered, a flash of fire in her black eyes. "Very soon. Obermeister admits—I listen through the door—that they lose terribly. France wins! We wipe out now the stain of '71! Perhaps tomorrow Hemmelbach must retreat. Then the soil we walk on, the hills and meadows—oh, even the very morning sunshine—again will be French. We shall live once more in France, not under the heel of the boche!"

No responsive enthusiasm lighted the other's blue eyes.

"These French," he mumbled in a detached tone, "they make of poor Antoine a laugh, est ce que?"

"You have the tongue of un traître!" flashed the girl. "Would you not have them laugh a little if only they can come to save France?"

The boy's lips framed a childish pout. "The Allemand," he said, "c'est mon ami! We are fine friends. He does not laugh!"

He slouched out and shuffled down the path, and the girl stared after him with puzzled eyes. She had never thought it worth while to argue with the idiot youth, but of late he had employed several rather recherche expressions that convinced her of some slight change in his mental state. Maturity might be bringing a low order of shrewdness to the diseased brain.

The kindly cure had suggested that.

MON pauvre fils!" he exclaimed, "he now grows up. Always comes a change in these poor foggy minds when they have years enough upon them. Many get sullen and vicious. With Antoine's terrible strength that would be a bad change indeed."

Of late Annette L'Ontaine had felt ill at ease in his presence. That evening the long gray columns began to swing through Monarche. Behind closed blinds Annette watched them.

She feared to be seen. Earlier in the war girls had dared to laugh and taunt the Allemands as they filed past in defeat. But such girls had paid terrible penalties, and those who remained were more careful. Neither did the expression on the faces of the beaten troops encourage open levity.

For the most part they marched steadily enough, but there was a queer twisted grimace about the mouths of the officers and a look of sullen rage in the heavy faces of the men as they goose-stepped past General Hemmelbach's staff. Too many of their comrades lay back there in the welter of mud and blood that marked their last stand on Karsy ridge.

For days the roar of the artillery had kept the hills shaking like great mounds of jelly. By daylight the fire showed in twisted spirals of smoke, soft and heavy, gray and black and white. By night the distant artillery lines were a wavering curtain of ruddy flame, shot with great shadows whenever two or three of the great guns ceased to cool.

Monarche became a charnel-house. By day it was a shambles of blood, its carts loaded with severed arms and legs and its very barns commandeered as hospitals. By night it was a fantastic hell, lit with the lurid flames of burning buildings and made hideous by the screams of the wounded. Annette had lived and shuddered and wept through all of this. And now these beaten boche lines were yielding again. They were retiring across the valley of Lac-qui-Arie to the hills beyond!

After they had gone it became again very quiet in Monarche. She judged that it was 3 o'clock in the morning. Restlessly she tossed about on her bed, her mind ringing with the triumphant thought that Monarche was again French! At dawn they came, mounted on lathered horses and cheering lustily—the vanguard of cavalry, riding through the streets of Monarche, still red with the invaders' blood.

She kissed her hand to them from the upper window and then rushed down to embrace the lathered neck of the first horse she reached. Old women and little children and tottering white-haired men clustered about the retrievers of Ventrière. Annette sang and sobbed and laughed and pressed her face against the horse's warm neck, while its rider, a handsome young lieutenant, reached down and patted her shoulder with tears in his own eyes.

BACK in the shadows Antoine skulked, peering out at the pollux with angry mien. They stared at his great bulk and monstrous head and laughed loudly. A sullen rage burned in his breast. It was just as the good Capitaine Obermeister had said—they laughed at him! He crept away while men and horses and supply trains braved the baffled Huns' long-range shells.

While the hysterical villagers laughed and sobbed and shouted "Vive la France!" Antoine lay in the cool shadows of the wrecked chateau. His eyes strained westward. Between the distant humps of Karsy ridge he could see the long lines of troops, marching in mass formation, secure in the knowledge that the foe was falling back and moving his big guns with him as he went.

They were using the south road, too, these men who laughed at him and went on again with no proffer of sweets and no assurance that he and they were friends! Captain Obermeister had arranged the signal if the south road were given preference by the advancing division.

Antoine held the lantern between his knees and swayed back and forth, intoning monotonously, "Une, deux, trois, quatre, cinq—" his eyes gleaming in his pale face with the sullen hate he bore against those who laughed at him, even as the wily capitaine had prophesied.

No one missed Antoine that evening, or sent him home with peremptory mandate, as they were wont to do when they found him roaming about the village. His aged mother worried over him, manifesting the same solicitude that had been hers when he was a chubby child of 3. But up in the aged ruins he swung the